



15th District

Legislative Update & Transportation Survey

Your
Opinions
Count!



***For the people of the
15th Legislative District
encompassing Yakima,
Benton, Klickitat and
Skamania counties.***

Keep in Touch

Senator

Jim Honeyford

201 John A. Cherberg Building
(Temporary office location
through December)

P.O. Box 40415

Olympia, WA 98504-0415

Phone: (360) 786-7684

E-mail: honeyfor_ji@leg.wa.gov

Representative

Barb Lisk

401 Legislative Building

P.O. Box 40600

Olympia, WA 98504-0600

Phone: (360) 786-7874

E-mail: lisk_ba@leg.wa.gov

Representative

Bruce Chandler

402 Legislative Building

P.O. Box 40600

Olympia, WA 98504-0600

Phone: (360) 786-7960

E-mail: chandler_br@leg.wa.gov

Toll-free Legislative Hotline:

1-800-562-6000



Rep. Bruce Chandler

Rep. Barb Lisk

Sen. Jim Honeyford

September 2001

Dear friends,

In the months since we convened the Legislature in January a number of events have taken place. Our state experienced significant earthquake damage. We responded to the effects of a drought and high-cost energy shortage, and worked through three special sessions to address transportation, agriculture disaster relief and other pressing matters.


The focus of the Legislature is now on transportation – a key issue left unfinished after our third special session in July. This update contains a questionnaire we hope you will complete so we can better understand how you feel about transportation funding issues being discussed.


Despite our unfinished business, there was a great deal of progress made during the first part of this year, including landmark water legislation which enacts the most important reforms in our state's water laws in 30 years. However, we are disappointed with the state operating budget which was passed by the Legislature. This two-year spending plan lacks accountability and is not a sustainable, responsible budget.

Our thanks to those of you who have taken the time to communicate with us over the last several months. We're honored to represent the citizens of the 15th District, and we always welcome your comments and questions.

Sincerely,


Jim Honeyford
State Senator


Barb Lisk
State Representative


Bruce Chandler
State Representative



Water reform is reality – finally

Entering the 2001 session, protecting water rights was high on our list of priorities. Rep. Chandler and Sen. Honeyford both served on committees appointed to negotiate water legislation. The end result was legislative passage of House Bill 1832. The measure is expected to reduce the backlog that is now more than 7,000 permit applications. It also is expected to speed up the water rights applications process by creating two lines, one for new rights and the other for changes or transfers. The clarification that local water conservancy boards are authorized to do the legwork on changes and transfers is good news for us. Local people can now participate in decisions about local water use.

Legislators persuade Ecology to hold off on water restrictions

Many people's jobs and lives depend on water within the 15th District and throughout the region. When more than 400 Washington water rights holders were notified by the Department of Ecology that their water would be shut off, including many people in our local area, we asked DOE to reconsider its position. We were able to successfully negotiate with DOE to find alternative means to deal with the drought emergency. Those efforts persuaded DOE not to impose regulations on emergency water wells.

Legislative Update



Sen. Honeyford (left) and other Senate Republicans from Eastern Washington held a news conference on water issues during the 2001 session.

Operating budget talks end in disappointment

Tax hikes or program cuts loom as probabilities

Earlier this year, all lawmakers seemed to agree that priorities must be set in the budget and decisions would be made about where to direct our limited resources. Unfortunately, the budget that passed fails to reflect any of the difficult decisions that we earlier agreed upon. Among other things, we're concerned that the 2001-03 budget relies on one-time money (money which once spent is not replaceable) for ongoing programs.

This budget is simply not sustainable and does a disservice to the taxpayers, especially those who truly need government assistance, because it puts important programs in jeopardy. Under any foreseeable scenario it will eventually require tax increases, real budget cuts to existing services, or both.



Lawmakers worked in cramped quarters in the weeks following the February 28th earthquake.

Addressing statewide transportation needs

Although we don't have the same traffic congestion problems as the central Puget Sound region, we understand the importance of a strong transportation system to our region. We want a responsible long-term transportation plan that protects our economy, keeps people and products moving, and includes efforts toward greater efficiency and accountability in the construction and maintenance of our highways.

We simply don't have the revenue necessary to make all the improvements that are needed. However, we believe that before we consider raising taxes to fund needed transportation improvements, efficiency and accountability measures should be adopted to make sure we're making the best use of the money we have.

This year, we approved legislation to streamline the permitting process, which could save as much as 20 percent on the cost of major highway projects. We adopted reforms to better coordinate the "design and build" phases of road construction. We also allowed for earlier acquisition of rights-of-way, which will help stretch tax dollars even further. Among the other efficiency and accountability safeguards sought were:

- Reforms to allow competitive bidding by private contractors for highway maintenance.
- Changes to mandatory wage laws that inflate the cost of road construction for local governments, especially in rural areas.

- Giving the final say to voters on any proposed new taxes.

Although the governor initially promised that there was to be a

vote of the people on the new taxes, he eventually reneged on his pledge.



The transportation proposal included two parts:

1 A statewide funding plan proposed by negotiators included a combination of new taxes, including a 9-cent-per-gallon gas tax hike, a 1½ percent sales tax increase on car purchases, a surcharge on diesel fuel (3 cents a gallon, plus the 9-cents gas tax increase, boosting new taxes on diesel fuel to 12 cents a gallon), and a hike in truck and recreational vehicle fees. Many feared allowing it to go to a vote of the people because the ballot measure might well be rejected.

2 A regional plan which allows the formation of regional tax districts to obtain voter approval for highway projects and taxes to fund the projects. Many rural legislators were very concerned that the urban areas of the state would obligate all the funds, especially if the rural areas were unable to pass the levies necessary to fund the local share of the project. This could result in decreased funding for rural parts of the state.

We know how important transportation is to our economy and our quality of life. We know the impact that this kind of tax increase could have on local families who are already struggling. That's why we want your input on this issue. Please take a moment to complete the Transportation Survey on the next page.

Transportation Survey

Transportation Survey

We'd like your opinion!

Your opinion matters to us greatly! Please take a moment to read the article, "Addressing state-wide transportation needs" on the adjacent page. Then we'd appreciate it if you would complete the survey below. When you are finished, fold it and tape it so that our return address appears on the outside. Affix postage and drop it in the mail.

We look forward to receiving your response and thank you in advance for sharing your thoughts and ideas.

1) Would you support an increase in the gas tax to pay for transportation improvements?

Voter 1 Voter 2
☐ ☐ Yes
☐ ☐ No

2) If yes, how much of an increase would you support? (choose one)

Voter 1 Voter 2
☐ ☐ 1-3 cents per gallon
☐ ☐ 4-6 cents per gallon
☐ ☐ 7-9 cents per gallon
☐ ☐ 10-15 cents per gallon

3) Which of the following would you also support to raise money for transportation improvements? (check all that apply)

Voter 1 Voter 2
☐ ☐ A 12-cent per gallon surcharge on diesel
☐ ☐ Increased weight fees for trucks
☐ ☐ New weight fees for motor homes
☐ ☐ An increase in the sales tax on car purchases
☐ ☐ None of the above

4) Which of the following best describes your opinion on the need for efficiencies in transportation? (choose one)

Voter 1 Voter 2
☐ ☐ I believe our transportation system is very efficient, and we need new taxes to complete important projects.
☐ ☐ I believe our transportation system could be more efficient, but I still believe new taxes are needed to complete important projects.
☐ ☐ I would only support tax increases for transportation if the Legislature adopted more efficiencies to make sure the money is better spent.
☐ ☐ I oppose new taxes for transportation and believe the Legislature should adopt more efficiencies to make sure existing taxes are better spent.

5) If the Legislature was to consider raising new taxes for transportation, what is your opinion about putting it to a public vote?

Voter 1 Voter 2
☐ ☐ The public should be allowed to vote on it, absolutely.
☐ ☐ I'm undecided as to whether the public should be allowed to vote.
☐ ☐ No, we elect lawmakers to represent us and they should make these decisions.

6) How many miles do you normally drive per week?

Voter 1 Voter 2
☐ ☐ Up to 25 miles a week
☐ ☐ Between 25 and 50 miles a week
☐ ☐ Between 50 and 75 miles a week
☐ ☐ Between 75 and 100 miles a week
☐ ☐ More than 100 miles a week



7) The latest proposal presented by negotiators included these provisions:

- A 9-cent gas tax increase
- An additional 3-cent increase on diesel (an increase of 12 cents overall, since the 9-cent gas tax increase also applies to diesel)
- A 10 percent increase on weight fees for trucks and motor homes
- A 1.5 percent increase in the sales tax on new and used vehicles

This plan would fund nearly \$9 billion in transportation improvements over the next 10 years. If placed on the ballot, how would you be inclined to vote on this package?

Voter 1 *Voter 2*

☐ ☐ No☐ ☐ Yes

 Undecided

Comments:

[illegible]

***Please return by October 1, 2001 so that your
opinions will be included in the survey results.***



Please
place
stamp
here



Sen. Jim Honeyford
Rep. Barb Lisk
Rep. Bruce Chandler
P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

Legislative Update & Transportation Survey

Let us hear from you!

Being your legislator doesn't stop when the legislative session is finished. We are continuing to work on your behalf on various legislative matters. Your priorities are our priorities. If you have any suggestions, comments or questions, please call or e-mail us. You may also use the toll free legislative hotline at 1-800-562-6000.

Sen. Jim Honeyford

(360) 786-7684

honeyfor_ji@leg.wa.gov

Rep. Barb Lisk

(360) 786-7874

lisk_ba@leg.wa.gov

Rep. Bruce Chandler

(360) 786-7960

chandler_br@leg.wa.gov



Rep. Bruce Chandler discusses legislation with a colleague on the House floor.

15th District
Legislative
Update &
Transportation
Survey

Sen. Jim Honeyford
Rep. Barb Lisk
Rep. Bruce Chandler
P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

PRESORTED
STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Washington State
Department of Printing